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Unity lies in strong States — DMK panel

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The sub-committee, appointed by the DMK to study the recommendations of the Rajamannar committee on Centre-State relations, has in its report said that "national unity should be based on State autonomy" and emphasised the need for a reappraisal of the Constitution in the light of our experiment with federalism.

While agreeing that "federal polity for India is an inevitability," the sub-committee said, "federalism is a growing concept capable of improvement according to change of times and needs."

"The country needs urgent measures of economic development by using the natural resources available in the States to mitigate the pitiable plight of the toiling millions. No country of the size and population of India can ever deliver the goods by accumulating powers at one point and by remote control."

"So, with a view to avoiding frustration and feelings of helplessness we sincerely advocate State autonomy to prevent further division," it added.

The sub-committee was appointed in 1971 with Mr. Murali Maran and Mr. Era Chezhian, MPs, as conveners, to submit a report giving the outlines of the "utmost autonomy of the States in a federal set-up without prejudice to the integrity of India as a whole."

The sub-committee's 8,226-word report was presented to the DMK Executive at its meeting here on Tuesday by Mr. Era Chezhian.

Pointing out the "inadequacies" of the present Constitution to meet the growing needs of the people and various nationalities, the sub-committee said the highly-centralised administration at New Delhi has smothered the individuality and initiative of the States.

One tragic result of this scheme was that the problem of regional backwardness had not been tackled...

ed...and many a State had raised the cry that the State was being treated as an "internal colony."

It said that State autonomy would not be disadvantageous to the backward States. On the contrary the members affirmed that only when backward States were given the opportunity and freedom to utilise their own resources by the efforts of their own best choice would they hope to get out of the vicious circle of backwardness.

Priorities were imposed on the State from above without any relevance whatsoever to prevailing conditions. This was the sorry state of affairs whether it was a state ruled by the Congress, the CPI, the CPM or the DMK.

The sub-committee added that strength did not lie in the width of assorted powers assumed by the Centre but in the depth and efficiency in the chosen fields necessary to maintain the unity and integrity of the country.

While the sub-committee was in total agreement with many recommendations of the Rajamannar committee, it sought to amend, alter and improve them in some cases. It has suggested additional amendments to the provisions of the Constitution not included in the Rajamannar committee report.

Among other things, the sub-committee recommended omission of Articles 356, 257, 339 (2) and 344 (6), (issue of directions to the States by the Union) as "they are opposed to the very concept of federalism and have no precedents in other constitutions."

The ideal of distribution of powers would be the allocation of defence, foreign affairs, inter-State communications and currency to the Centre and allocations of all other powers including residuary powers to the States.

The concurrent list "a peculiar feature of our Constitution should be restricted to the 'barest minimum possible'." The report suggested acceptance of the recommendations of the Rajamannar committee in regard to financial relations, planning, judiciary, Governors, emergency provisions, public services, representation of States in Parliament, language, trade and commerce, public order and inter-State water disputes.

Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi told newsmen that the business advisory committee of the Legislature would discuss and fix a date for consideration by the Assembly of the Rajamannar committee report.

He said the Maran-Chezhian committee report would help the DMK when the Rajamannar committee report was discussed in the Legislature.

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